

# COLUMBIA RIVER TECHNICAL MANAGEMENT TEAM

December 17, 2014

Facilitator's Summary

Facilitator, Emily Plummer; Notes, Tory Hines DS Consulting

*The following Facilitator's Summary is intended to capture basic discussion, decisions and actions, as well as point out future actions or issues that may need further discussion at upcoming meetings. These notes are not intended to be the "record" of the meeting, only a reminder for TMT members.*

## **Chum Spawning Operation**

Doug Baus, COE-NWD, provided an update on the Chum spawning operation. He noted the operation was coordinated back in October and the Corps began implementation on November 1<sup>st</sup>. Thus far the operation has been implemented as planned and as of this morning (0800) the tailwater was at 12.7 feet with a total outflow of 125.1kcfs. Operation parameters are available on the TMT website.

Paul Wagner, NOAA, noted this was a challenging year due to a lack of continuous data from field crews. Paul noted that he spoke with WDFW and it appears that Chum spawning is nearing the end, however, there are still fish spawning. This year, redds were observed further up the channel than previous years, as a result a higher protection level to be set for incubation and emergence. Paul continued to report that water levels at Bonneville are rising and the project may not be able to hold 13ft for much longer, however, expects to be able to hold it until next week. As of yesterday, FPAC members were okay with maintaining a 13 foot daytime threshold until more information is available from surveys on 12/23. FPAC has made a request for specific details from the survey and is hoping that it will inform as to what a reasonable protection level will look like going forward. Joe Skalicky, USFWS, noted that hopefully the surveys will provide depth information and a map of the elevation and location of the redds.

The trap at Duncan Creek will be removed on December 23<sup>rd</sup> which will require a 11.5-12.5ft elevation from 0800 to 1400 hours.

- **ACTION:** The Corps will continue the current operation, holding the daytime elevation between 11.5-13.0ft, until 0800 on December 23<sup>rd</sup>. As of 0800 on the 23<sup>rd</sup>, the elevation will be kept between 11.5-12.5 for the Duncan Creek trap removal. At 1500 hours, the operation will shift to the Chum incubation operation, which calls for a minimum tailwater elevation of 13.0ft during all hours. Additional information will be gathered during surveys on the 23<sup>rd</sup> and TMT will check in on and adjust the operation if needed at the January 7<sup>th</sup> TMT meeting.

## **Spill Priority List:**

Doug Baus, COE-NWD, reported on the Spill Priority List. He noted the list is a continuation of the current list and the only change made was a redaction of the end date. Rather than stating a specific end date, the SPL list now will be implemented as stated "until further notice". The document is revisable and if a TMT member requests a change it will be considered following

internal and external coordination at the Corps. Doug noted the Corps will continue to implement the operation as discussed.

**Zero Nighttime Generation on the Lower Snake River Projects:**

Tony Norris, BPA, reported on the zero nighttime generation operation. He noted the trigger has yet to be hit and water temperatures have crept up from 5 to 6.5 degrees Celsius. However, there is still potential the trigger will be hit by the end of the month and the operation will be implemented as coordinated. Paul Wagner expressed that he is fine with the AAs tracking and implementing the operation if the triggers are hit, and it is not necessary for them to wait for word from him. Doug noted the criteria include a rolling 3-day average count of less than or equal to 65 total Steelhead and 20 wild Steelhead at Lower Granite. If these criteria are not met by the end of December then the AAs will implement the operation on January 1<sup>st</sup> when the Lower Granite Dam fish ladder goes out of service.

**The next TMT meeting will be a conference call meeting on January 7th at 9:00am.**

**Columbia River Regional Forum**  
**TECHNICAL MANAGEMENT TEAM – OFFICIAL MINUTES**

**December 17, 2014**  
Minutes: Pat Vivian

***1. Introduction***

Doug Baus, COE, chaired this TMT conference call facilitated by Emily Plummer, DS Consulting. Representatives of the COE, NOAA, Idaho, BPA, BOR, Colville Tribe, USFWS, Montana, Yakama Tribe, and others participated. This summary is an official record of the proceedings, not a verbatim transcript.

***2. Chum Spawning Operation***

Baus reported. Since 6 am, November 1, the COE has been implementing the chum operation TMT coordinated last October, which calls for daytime (6 am-5 pm) BON tailwater elevations of 11.5-13.0' and nighttime elevations of up to 18.5'.

As of 8 am today, the BON tailwater elevation was 12.7' with total project outflows of 125.1 kcfs. The AAs would like to transition from the chum spawning to incubation operation on December 23, at 3pm after WDFW removes the Duncan Creek trap which requests a tailwater no higher than 12.5 ft and is currently scheduled to occur between the hours of 8 am to 2 pm. Due to WDFW contracting problems, surveying has been minimal this year, and little is known about the elevations at which chum redds have been established, making it that much harder to establish protective flows with confidence.

Paul Wagner, NOAA, described spawning activity that has been observed this year. This is a challenging year for chum flow management due to lack of ongoing data from field crews. WDFW believes that spawning is nearly done and the operation should shift to the incubation operation soon. It appears that chum spawning is following normal timing this year. WDFW indicated the only change is that fish are spawning further up the channel than usual, which presents new challenges in setting a protection flow level.

BPA said it will be difficult to keep the BON tailwater at current daytime levels of 13' for much longer, but flow predictions change daily. If the BON tailwater elevation goes above 13.0', spawning elevations and protection levels will also increase. The latest reports indicate the tailwater elevation can be held below the current operation of 13' for a while longer. A survey is scheduled for December 23, which should assist in determining an appropriate protection level going forward.

USFWS would like a map of redd locations and elevations (depth) so FPAC can set an appropriate protection elevation in the BON tailwater. Yesterday FPAC discussed 13.5' which Wagner didn't support because it might encourage spawning above 13.0'. NOAA's recommendation is to maintain the current chum protection level below 13.0'

elevation in the BON tailwater until further surveys indicate a higher protection level is warranted.

Until more is known, Tony Norris, BPA, suggested setting the tailwater elevation at 12.5' (which is 0.5' below the upper limit of the current spawning tailwater elevation of 13.0') for the chum incubation operation starting on December 23 at 3pm. This approach would be consistent with previous TMT-coordinated chum incubation operations which result in setting the tailwater 0.5' below the upper tailwater elevation limit of the chum spawning operation. Wagner agreed 12.5' elevation in the BON tailwater should suffice for the incubation operation based on past experience and what is known to date of chum redd locations this year. Joe Skalicky, USFWS, said chum do spawn at night, and a significant number of redds could have been established at higher elevations due to the high nighttime elevations associated with this year's operation. He advocated for a chum incubation minimum elevation of 13.0' until survey results can better inform a decision about protection levels. Norris agreed 13' is an acceptable interim elevation.

The AAs will continue maintaining the current chum spawning operation (11.5-13.0' day and up to 18.5' at night) through December 23 at 3pm. Prior to ending the spawning operation on December 23 the AAs will maintain tailwater in the range of 11.5-12.5' between the hours of 8 am and 2 pm so WDFW may remove the Duncan Creek Trap. At 1500 hours, the AAs will begin the chum incubation operation (minimum tailwater elevation of 13.0' all hours). The TMT will revisit this operation during the next TMT conference call scheduled for January 7.

### ***3. Spill Priority List***

Baus reported the spill priority list linked to today's agenda is set to expire on December 31. The only change to the list from what has already been implemented is a change in the end date. TMT was asked to revisit the spill priority list and advise the COE on whether it still meets fish needs. It was clarified that a TMT member who wants a change in spill priorities can request a change at any time. The proposed list assigns spill priority at projects in order from downstream to upstream (BON up to LWG). Wagner said FPAC is happy with current spill priority list and doesn't recommend a change at this time. The COE will extend the current spill priority list until FPAC requests a change, which Wagner said is highly unlikely anytime soon.

### ***4. Zero Nighttime Generation on Lower Snake River Projects***

The trigger for zero nighttime generation on lower Snake projects has not yet been met, probably due to warmer water temperatures than usual at this time of year, Norris reported. This is in line with NOAA's expectations regarding adult passage at the lower Snake projects, Wagner replied. Because the holidays are coming up, Baus asked whether the COE should simply implement zero nighttime generation operation when the trigger is met, or await notification from NOAA. Wagner said it's fine to implement zero nighttime generation on the lower Snake projects once the trigger – a rolling 3-day average count of less than or equal to 65 total steelhead and 20 wild steelhead at Lower

Granite and Lower Monumental dams – has been met. If this threshold is not met by January 1 when the fish ladders are taken out of service, zero nighttime generation will be implemented at that time.

### **5. Next TMT Meeting**

TMT's next meeting will be a conference call on January 7. David Wills, USFWS, will be retiring and was thanked for his many years of TMT participation.

<b>Name</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>
Paul Wagner	NOAA
Russ Kiefer	Idaho
Tony Norris	BPA
Mary Mellema	BOR
Sheri Sears	Colville
Laura Hamilton	COE
Joe Skalicky	USFWS
Jim Litchfield	Montana
David Wills	USFWS
Doug Baus	COE
Karl Kanbergs	COE
Tory Hines	DSC
Tom Iverson	Yakama
Lisa Wright	COE
Shane Scott	PPC
Barry Espenson	CBB